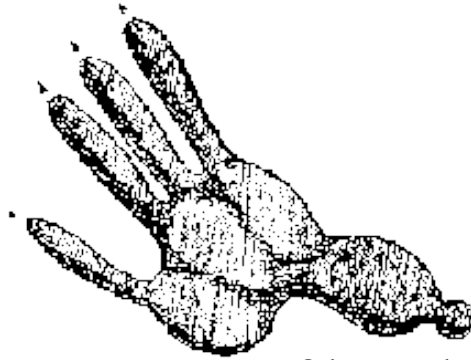


# Opossum



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- The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) provides advice on urban wildlife issues, but does not provide nuisance opossum control.
  - **DO NOT FEED OPOSSUMS! Keep all pet food and water inside!**
  - **Keep garbage can lids secured.**
  - **Keep compost piles covered (never include bones or animal fat).**
  - **Do not feed feral cats.**
  - **Secure domestic birds in sturdy enclosures.**
  - **Seal holes in structures to eliminate potential shelter.**
  - **You may live trap and relocate opossums without a permit (Title 76)**

## Biological Information

**Distribution :** across Louisiana, most of Eastern U.S., south into Mexico

**Habitat:** wooded areas with water close by is preferred, also any timbered area, agricultural area, marshes, residential neighborhoods. Dens in a burrow, hollow tree or log.

**Appearance:** size of domestic house cat, with shorter legs and heavier body. The female has an external fur-lined abdominal pouch for carrying young. Adults average about 4 pounds. It has 50 teeth, more than any other Louisiana land mammal.

**Food habits:** eats anything, including insects, fruit, berries, small mammals, birds, eggs, carrion. It commonly raids garbage cans.

**Habits:** have an ability to act dead, called “playing possum.” This condition is induced by fear and stress. They appear unconscious,

the mouth opens slightly, drooling occurs, the entire body becomes limp, and the feet clutch together. Opossums are clean animals and groom regularly. They do not hibernate. Opossums have a keen sense of smell.

**Reproduction:** mates in December and January, again in April, and sometimes in mid-summer. After 12-13 day, 15 or more pre-mature embryos leave the womb and crawl to the pouch. Average litter size in Louisiana is seven. The young are extremely tiny, blind and incomplete in development. It takes 22-24 newborns to equal the weight of a penny. They are weaned in 75-80 days. As they grow, they cling to the mother’s fur and ride on her back.

**Controls:** preyed upon by dogs and Great Horned Owls; relatively free of parasites; afflicted by tapeworms and flatworms.



## Live Trapping Opossums



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- Food items such as slightly spoiled meat or fruit serve as effective bait for opossums.
- Wear heavy gloves when handling the trap. Open the trap away from you and move away.
- Place the trap in a location where the trapped opossum will not be disturbed by humans or pets.
- Check the trap frequently to avoid causing excessive stress to the animal.